

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd to the

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of M A N N E R S,

A T

SALTER's-HALL,

On M O N D A Y, J U N E 28, 1725.

By S A M U E L P R I C E.

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DEUTER. VIII. XI.

Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy GOD, in not keeping his Commandments, and his Judgments, and his Statutes, which I command thee this Day.



THE various Dispensations of Providence towards Men are well suited to their State of Tryal in this World : And it becomes them to Watch against the Temptations of the several Circumstances thro' which they pass. Such is the Depravity of Human Nature, that it is apt to take Occasion from every Condition of Life to transgress the righteous Laws of God. It was a high Attainment of the Apostle *Paul*, that he *knew how to be abased, and how to abound*. God prov'd the Children of *Isreal* by many Difficulties in their Progress through the Wilderness ; and their Behaviour in the Straits, into which they were brought

brought, discover'd the great Corruption of their Hearts. *Moses* had often heard them murmur, when they met with that which was troublesome; he had frequently observed their untoward Temper in Adversity: Well then might he apprehend that they would be in danger of abusing Prosperity; for it is very seldom that Men are made really better hereby: This Servant of God acted therefore a faithful Part in cautioning the *Israelites* against the Sins to which they would be inclin'd when they came to partake of the Ease and Plenty of the Land of *Canaan*.

THE Goodness of that Land, which God had promised the Seed of *Abraham*, is represented in this Chapter, whereof my Text is a Part. They were encourag'd to expect, that they should be furnish'd herein, not only with the Necessaries, but with a Rich Abundance of the Conveniencies of Life; and they were assur'd that, in a little Time, they should take Possession of this desirable Country: Yet, lest they should be too much delighted, with the near Prospect of so much earthly Good, *Moses* lets them know that this wou'd not be without its Snares. To prevent their being guilty of so great an Evil, as the Misimprovement of the Bounties of Divine Providence, which they were now about to receive, the Duties, to which they would be hereby strongly oblig'd, were a fresh set before them; the Laws, which they formerly heard, were repeated to them; and they were put in mind of the Hardships with which they had been exercis'd in the Wilderness; and of their frequent Miscarriages under them, that they might use the Comforts of the good Land, into which they were entering, with greater Gratitude to God, and Diffidence of themselves.

THE Acknowledgment of their Obligations to God for these Mercies is recommended in the Verse immediately preceeding my Text. *When thou hast Eaten and art Full,* 'when thy Wants shall be plentifully supply'd: *Then thou shalt bless the Name of the Lord thy God for the good Land which he hath given thee.* 'Thou shouldst give him th'Glory of thy Enjoyments. In my Text they are caution'd against a misuse of them: *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God.* 'See to it, that thou be not so fond of the Benefits, as 'to neglect the Benefactor: Take care that thy Lusts 'be not fed and strengthen'd by the liberal Provisions 'made for thy comfortable Subsistence, that thou 'dost not live as without God in the World: *Not keeping his Commandments, and his Judgments, and his Statutes, which I command thee this Day.* This Warning given to the *Israelitish* Nation deserves our careful Notice, and may be improv'd to serve the Purpose of our present Meeting. In discoursing upon it, I shall endeavour,

1. To shew you why a Nation, or People, should be upon their Guard against Irreligion and Immorality, when they are in a Prosperous Condition.

2. Point you to some Particular Instances of Vice and Prophaness, to which Persons are in a special Manner liable, and against which they should Watch with the greatest Care, when their sensible Enjoyments abound.

3. CONSIDER the Extent of the Caution; then apply it to ourselves.

1. I shall endeavour to shew you why a Nation, or People, should be upon their Guard against Irreligion, and Immorality, when they are in a Prosperous Condition: That Care and Vigilance are far from being needless in this Case, will appear, if we consider, 1. That Human Nature is so degenerate as to be very prone to pervert the Instances

stances of God's Goodness to his Dishonour. As the Weeds spring up by the Means of warm Showers, which refresh the Earth; so the Corruptions of Mens Hearts are apt to draw Nourishment to themselves, from the bountiful Supplies which God gives to their Bodily Wants. Does not the Conduct of many in Prosperity discover such Lusts in a very high Degree, as were hardly thought to be in them, when their Circumstances were strait, and mean? Have we not seen Persons, who pretended some regard to God, in lower Stations of Life, abandoning all the Forms of Godliness when they have grown Rich and Great in the World? As the Temptations of extream Poverty are very pressing, so a Fullness of those Things, which are grateful to our present Appetites, is ensnaring.

WHEN there is a large Provision made for the Flesh, it is no easy Matter to forbear fullfilling the Lusts of it. It is very Notorious, that Places which have been best accommodated with the good Things of Time have been very infamous for Wickedness: *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* were most agreeably situated; they stood in a very fertile Plain, *which was well water'd every where; even as the Garden of the Lord.* Gen. 13. 10. *They are said to have fullness of Bread.* Eze. 16. 49. And their Iniquities are well known.

MOSES was appriz'd of the Dangers of a prosperous Condition; that the *Israelites* would be apt to neglect God, and to depart from his Ways, when they were settled in the Promis'd Land, and fill'd with its Rich Fruits: Therefore he inculcates upon them the Caution in my Text: He requires them again and again to look well to themselves, lest they should misimprove the Mercies of God, and not render unto him according to the Benefits where-
with

with he should load them. Chap. 6. 11, 12. *when thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware, lest thou forget the Lord.* But notwithstanding all that he could say, or do, to impress them with a Sense of their Danger, they did not sufficiently watch against it. They contemn'd God, and would not be govern'd by his Laws when he plentifully Fed them, as appears from what is foretold in the 32. Chap. Ver. 15. *Jeshurun waxed Fat and Kicked: Thou art waxen Fat, thou art grown Thick, thou art covered with Fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteem'd the Rock of his Salvation.* So that Men are too much disposed to neglect God, and to run into such Courses as are displeasing to him, when their worldly Enjoyments are multiply'd. Iniquity too commonly abounds in a Day of Peace and Plenty; therefore a vigorous Opposition to it is then in an especial Manner proper: This will be further evident, if we consider,

2. How culpable it is in Men to forget God, and violate his Laws, when they dwell at Ease, and enjoy Prosperity; though this be a very common, yet it is a very great Evil. *Every good Gift comes from God: He is the Father of Mercy, and the God of all Comfort.* None should ascribe the Increase of their Riches to their own skillful Management, or Diligent Application; it is the Divine Blessing that maketh Rich. All Mankind depend entirely upon God: *It is He that gives them Rain from Heaven, and Fruitful Seasons, filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness.* Acts 14. 17. And they are greatly obliged to Him for every Benefit they receive; because they have provoked him by their Transgressions. And what can be more fitting than the Love and Obedience of Guilty Creatures to that Being by whose Grace they are supported and liberally supply'd? Is it not highly reasonable that they
abound

abound in his Work, who enlargeth their Circumstances?

THE Riches of God's Goodness leadeth Men to Repentance. Rom. 2. 4. It must be then the greatest Disingenuity to take Occasion from them to practise those Things which are abominable to Him. What can be baser than to turn his Mercies into Instruments of Rebellion against Him? Those whom God fully Feeds, who are surrounded with Accommodations, break the strong Ties of Gratitude, if they are unmindful of Him, if their Time and Strength be spent in the Service of his Enemies.

How are the *Israelites* reproach'd for their ungrateful Returns to God, whose tender Mercy they had largely experienc'd? Chap. 32. 5. 6. *They have Corrupted themselves, they are a Perverse and Crooked Generation: Do ye thus requite the Lord, O Foolish People and Unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath Bought thee? Hath He not Made thee and Establish'd thee?* The Heavens, and the Earth are call'd upon to attend while the Lord complain'd of their Behaviour towards Him, who dealt very kindly by them. Isa. 1. 2. *Hear, O Heavens, give Ear, O Earth: For the the Lord hath Spoken, I have Nourished and Brought up Children, and they have Rebelled against Me.* The Ox and the Ass, though remarkable for their Stupidity, are said to act a more sensible and ingenuous Part toward their Owner and Master.

GOD Communicates his Blessings to the Children of Men, that may be capable of discharging their Duties, of being Useful to their Fellow-Creatures, and of Serving their Creator; are they not then Guilty of a gross Abuse and Perversion of his Favours, who consume them upon their Lusts, which are hereby Strengthen'd to War
against

against God and their precious Souls. It is therefore a great Evil to turn the Goodness of God into Wantonness, and it ought to be carefully avoided.

3. PERSONS should *beware that they forget not God, in not keeping his Laws, when the Lines are fallen to them in pleasant Places*, because they may justly expect that the Consequences hereof will be very dreadful: It is highly reasonable to suppose that the Punishments of Men will bear some proportion to the Goodness they have neglected, or abus'd.

INDEED, Dissolution of Manners has a natural Tendency to Poverty and Distress in this World; when People have not the Fear of God before their Eyes, but give a loose to their Appetites, run to excess of Riot, much Idleness ensues, their Substance is wasted, Health impair'd, and Death hasten'd: *They eat of the bitter Fruit of their own Way, and are fill'd with the sad Effects of their own Devices: The turning away of the Simple shall slay them, the Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them*, Prov. 1. 31. 32. Besides, the Righteous Governour and Judge of the World, will not suffer his abus'd Mercies to be unreveng'd. They who *dispipe the Riches of Divine Goodness*, and are hereby harden'd and embolden'd in Sin, are said to *Treasure up for themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath*. Rom. 2. 4, 5.

MOSES, to enforce the Caution given in my Text, tells the *Children of Israel*, that they should certainly *Perish*, if they did forget God, and were not *Obedient to his Voice*, when they were well furnish'd with the best that this World can afford. V. 19 20. To deter them from such a disingenuous Behaviour, a severe Threat'ning is recorded. Chap. 28. 47, 48. *Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with Joyfulness and Gladness of Heart, for the Abundance of all Things: Therefore shalt thou Serve thine Enemies,*

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which the Lord shall send against thee, in Hunger, and in Thirst, and in Nakedness, and in Want of all Things. When their ill Use of the Affluence of Creature Comforts, which they should enjoy, is foretold, they are inform'd that this would be terribly resented by God. Chap. 32. 19. *When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the Provoking of his Sons, and of his Daughters.* The Desolation made by his Anger upon this Account, is express'd in very awful Language, ver. 22. 23. *A Fire is kindled in my Anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Hell, and consume the Earth with her Increase, and set on Fire the Foundations of the Mountains. I will heap Mischiefs upon them, I will spend mine Arrows upon them.*

WE may observe God Speaking to them in the same Strain by the Prophets: It will be sufficient to set down a few Passages to this Purpose, out of one of them. *Hosea 2. 8, 9. She did not know that I gave her Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and multiply'd her Silver, and Gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore I will return, and take away my Corn, in the Time thereof, and will recover my Wool, and my Flax, given to cover her Nakedness.* Again, Chap. 11. 4, 5, 6. *I drew them with Cords of a Man, with Bands of Love, and I was to them as they that take off the Yoke on their Jaws, and I laid Meat unto them. Because they refused to return, the Sword shall abide on his Cities, and consume his Branches, and devour them. All these Threat'nings, and Predictions, were punctually executed, and fulfill'd, as appears from the Jewish History.*

THUS I have represented the Danger of Vice, and Praphaneness, in a Time of Prosperity, which shews that Watchfulness against them, is then in a special Manner needful.

2. I shall point you to some particular Instances of these, to which Persons are more especially liable, and against which they should watch with the utmost

most Care, when sensible Enjoyments abound,
as,

1. A Neglect of God : This is intended by *forgetting of him* in my Text. *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God.* It may seem strange, that Men should be most inclin'd to disregard the Divine Being, when they enjoy the most numerous Evidences of his kind Notice of them ; yet so it is in Fact. When they are prosper'd by him, and their Affairs have a pleasing Aspect, they are often so delighted herewith, that *God is not in all their Thoughts.* What they receive from him engrosses their Hearts, and takes up that Love, to which he is entitled. Such is the natural Vanity of the Children of Men, that they are too commonly made Proud and Insolent, by a Fullness of earthly Comforts, so as to attribute their Successes to themselves, and overlook their Obligations to God. When the Heart is lifted up, Forgetfulness of God will soon follow ; *beware,* says *Moses*, in the Ver. immediately following my Text, *lest when thou hast Eaten, and art full, and hast built goodly Houses, and thy Silver, and thy Gold is multiply'd ; then thy Heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God ; and then say in thy Heart, my Power and the Might of my Hand hath gotten me this Wealth.* Vain Man ! when he is in a plentiful Condition, is ready to think that he has *Goods laid up for many Years*, to place his Trust in Creatures, and to become insensible of his Dependance upon God. The natural Consequence hereof is a departure from his Statutes.

As the Word of God has publish'd the Institutions, by the Observance of which he is to be worship'd by Men ; so it plainly declares to us the Appointment of One Day in Seven, for the solemn Celebration of them : By waiting upon him on that Day, in the Manner which he has requir'd, his

People pay their Homage to him, testify their Mindfulness of him, and by this Means their Piety is promoted. Therefore when the Sabbath is not kept *holy*, the House of God is unfrequented, and his Ordinances disus'd, he may be said to be *forgotten*. But it is very rarely that Persons stop here, when they have gone thus far, they usually proceed to more Ungodliness. They should therefore *beware of forgetting God, when they have Eaten and are full*; a meer Neglect of so gracious a Benefactor is a great Evil; but it is commonly the Beginning of much greater Iniquities.

2. THE corrupt Hearts of Men are apt in prosperous Circumstances, to run into daring Impieties, *evil Men wax worse and worse*: It is too common for those, who grow indifferant to the Worship of God, to harden themselves against him, and to offer vile Indignities to his Majesty. The Psalmist says, that the Wicked, *when they have more than Heart can wish, set their Mouths against the Heavens*, Psal. 73. 9. They become bold in Sin, and are not afraid to blaspheme the Name of the Great God, who dwelleth in the Heavens. They defy his Vengeance by their prophane Oaths and Curses, *because Sentence is not speedily executed against their evil Works, their Heart is fully set in them to do Evil*, Eccl. 8. 11. Their Continuance in a thriving Condition, notwithstanding their Offences, makes them Audacious in their Wickedness: *They stretch out their Hands against God*, as Eliphaz says, *and Strengthen themselves against the Almighty, they run upon him, even on his Neck, upon the thick Bosses of his Bucklers; because they cover their Faces with Fatness*. Job. 15. 25, 26, 27.

AGUR acknowledges, that the Danger of *Atheistical* Principles and Practices, when Riches increase, was the Reason why he was not desirous of them. Prov. 30. 9. *Lest I be full, and deny thee, and*

and say, who is the Lord? ‘ Left I should Think,
 ‘ Speak, or Act, as if I had nothing to do with thee,
 ‘ nothing to Fear, or Hope, from thee. So that
 Men are very liable to gross Impieties in a Day of
 Prosperity; which they should carefully Guard a-
 gainst, for they are Instances of the prodigious De-
 generacy of Mankind, and sink them beneath the
 Beast that perish.

3. An immoderate Use of sensible Enjoyments
 is too common, when they abound. Man’s *Apostacy*
 from God, has, without doubt, greatly disorder’d
 his Nature; his Understanding, which was design’d
 to guide and govern him, is become weak and
 dark; his Passions and Appetites, whose Place it is
 to follow the Dictates of his Reason, are strong and
 violent: It is no easy Matter to keep these within
 due Bounds, when Objects that are agreeable are
 presented to them. The Names of those irregular
 Affections, which are found in Men, are given to
 the Things of the World, because they are so easi-
 ly influenc’d by them. 1. John. 2. 15. 16. *Love*
not the World, neither the Things that are in the World;
for all that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, Lust of the
Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father, but is
of the World.

MEN should keep a strait Rein upon their Appe-
 tites, when they are well provided with the Enter-
 tainments of this Earth; they will otherwise
 transgress the Rules of Temperance. Gluttony
 and Drunkenness, are Sins against which Persons
 should particularly set themselves, when Provi-
 dence favours them in their outward Concerns.
 Are they not hurtful to them, as well as offensive
 unto God? Is not human Nature hereby disgrac’d?
 Does it not lose the Advantage of the Character of
Reasonable? the excessive Use of that, which God
 has given for the Preservation and Refreshment of
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the frail Nature of Men, not only fills their Consciences with Guilt, but their Bodies with Pains and Diseases : It exposes them to the greatest Injuries ; they are hereby rendered Stupid and Defenceless, while they are encompass'd with innumerable Evils. The Wise Man speaks of the Drunkard's Case, and Situation, as exceeding dangerous. Prov 23. 34. *Thou shalt be as he that sits down in the midst of the Sea, or as he that lieth on the top of a Mast.* Surely it must be a grievous Provocation to God to see his Creatures, whom he has endued with Reason, acting so mad a Part, and his Favours prostituted to so base a Purpose.

4. **UNCLEAN** and Lewd Practices too frequently prevail, when the Temporal Affairs of People are prosper'd ; the immoderate Use of sensible Enjoyments, which is very incident to Persons in this Case, as you have heard ; has an unhappy Tendency to promote these Vices. When *Solomon* insists upon the bad Effects of Excess in Drinking, he mentions this as one of them, *thine Eyes shall behold strange Women.* Prov. 23. 33. When the Flesh is pamper'd, the Desires of it will grow Head-Strong and Ungovernable. *Rioting and Drunkenness* generally issue in *Chambering and Wantonness*. How sad is it, to observe Persons lavish a great deal of the Silver, and Gold, which by the good Providence of God are multiply'd in a Nation, upon such Diversions as provoke impure Desires, and facilitate the fullfilling of them. Is it not a doleful Sight to behold some consuming their Abundance upon the insatiable Cravings of the Flesh, while others want the Necessaries of Life? Multitudes have been reduc'd from plentiful to indigent Circumstances, by indulging their brutal Inclinations. Prov. 6. 26. *By Means of a whorish Woman a Man is brought to a piece of Bread.* But an Attachment to her has yet a far worse Consequence ;

as

as appears from what the Wise Man says in the 32. Ver. *Whoſo committeth Adultery with a Woman, lacketh Underſtanding : He that doth it, deſtroyeth his own Soul.*

GOD has expreſſed in the Scriptures a very great Abhorrence of thoſe who take occaſion from his Mercies to run into *Laſcivious* Practices. He ſpeaks, as if it would not become his Honour, to ſuffer ſuch an Iniquity to eſcape his Vengeance, to paſs by ſo great an Offence without a ſevere Punishment. Jer. 5. 7, 8, 9. *How ſhall I Pardon thee for this ? Thy Children have forſaken me ; when I had fed them to the Full, they then committed Adultery, and aſſembled themſelves by Troops in the Harlots Houſes. Shall I not viſit for theſe Things ? ſaith the Lord : And ſhall not my Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this is ? The Cities of the Plain, where there was Fullneſs of Bread, are Monuments of God's Indignation againſt thoſe, who pervert his Mercies to ſubſerve their filthy Luſts. Jude 7. Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities about them giving themſelves over to Fornication, and going after ſtrange Fleſh, are ſet forth for an Example, ſuffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire.*

3. THE Extent of the Caution is to be conſidered. This is indeed of univerſal Concern : *Moses* ſpeaks in my Text to the whole Nation of *Iſrael* as to a ſingle Perſon : *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God.* But in as much as they ſuſtain'd different Characters ; ſome of them were Rulers, others were Ruled, and all of them ſtood related to one another as Members of the ſame Society ; it muſt be ſuppoſ'd that what is here ſaid oblig'd them to uſe all the Power and Influence they had in their ſeveral Stations, to oppoſe what was diſhonourable to God, and contrary to his Laws This is Incumbent upon all of us ; and we may learn from the words of *Moses*, what is our preſent Duty.

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1. It is every one's Duty to look well to himself, *to beware that he forget not God, in not keeping his Commandments.*

It would be a great Happiness to any Community on Earth, if every particular Member of it did keep his own Heart with diligence, and watch his Ways. This is enjoyned upon all by our blessed Saviour. *Mark. 13. 37.* Proper Means should be used by them to maintain upon their Minds a lively Sense of Religion. They ought carefully to guard against the least Deviations from the Paths of Vertue. Sin is Decetiful; how many have been prevailed upon to commit it in some lesser Instances, designing to go no further: Yet by degrees they have been brought to practice the greatest Enormities without scruple, the Thoughts of which were once shocking to them. When Persons begin to backslide, they know where they shall stop. Coldness and Indifference as to some of the smaller Duties of Piety, has often ended in total *Apostacy*: It behoves every one, whose Conscience has any Tenderness, *to take heed lest he should be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.*

THE World is full of Temptations, with which the corrupt Hearts of Men are apt to comply: They should therefore be circumspect. It ought to be their Care in every Condition to keep up a Remembrance of their Dependance upon God, and Obligations to him; and frequently consider that *they must appear before his Judgment-Seat to give an Account of the Mercies which they enjoy, and to receive from him according to the Use they make of them.* How unreasonable is it in Men to forget God, *in whose Hand is their Breath, and whose are all their Ways,* by whom their eternal State shall be determin'd? What Folly are they guilty of, *who keep not his Statutes?* These are *Holy, Just, and Good*; those,

who

who depart from them, act contrary to their Intrest, as well as Duty.

GOD requir'd his People, under the *Mosaick-Law*, to observe a great Number of Ordinances, which render'd it a *heavy Yoke* unto them. Some of the *Statutes* he gave them seem to be calculated to make them desirous of a *Reformation*; which was accomplish'd by the coming of Christ, his Gospel has set Persons at liberty from all burthensome Institutions: It reveals God not only under the most awful, but the most amiable Characters: There is nothing wanting herein to make his Ways Pleasantness, and his Paths Peace. Are they not therefore inexcusable, who forget God, and keep not his Commandments, amidst all the Advantages of the Christian Dispensation? Such a Conduct must end in Ruin and Death; it is then of the greatest Importance to Men that they beware of such guilty Behaviour: And in order hereto, they should converse much with the Word of God. Where the Bible is neglected, God is not remember'd, nor his Laws observ'd. The careful perusal of this Book is an excellent Means to preserve and promote Godliness. *Moses* exhorts the *Israelites* to make the Words which he commanded them the great Subject of their Conversation. Chap. 6. 7. thou shalt talk of them when thou sitteth in thy House, and when thou walketh by the Way, and when thou liest Down, and when thou risest Up. Their Thoughts were to be employ'd about them, they were frequently to consult them, as appears from what follows, in the 8. and 9. Ver. thou shalt bind them for a Sign upon thine Hand, and they shall be as Frontlets between thine Eyes, thou shalt Write them upon the Posts of thy House, and on thy Gates. The Design of these Advices was to prevent a Forgetfulness of God. If the glorious Gospel of Christ was attended to as it deserves, if this was heard, and read with greater diligence,

we might hope to see Righteousness, Sobriety, and Godliness prevail more in the World.

2. It is the Duty of Masters and Heads of Families, not only to look well to themselves, but to watch against Irreligion and Immorality in those who are under their Care. It is not uncharitable to suppose that he is unmindful of God, who is unconcern'd how those of his Household behave towards the great Creator. Is it sinful in those who have Children, and Servants, not to use their best Endeavours to provide that which is proper for the Support and Defence of their Bodies? Certainly then they cannot be blameless, if they are negligent of their Manners; if they suffer them to run into such Courses as are provoking to the Almighty, and endanger the Destruction of their precious Souls.

Social Worship, as well as civil Government, began in Families; the Heads of these were at First, not only Kings, but Priests. After Mankind were multiply'd, and found it necessary to form themselves into larger Societies, the Power and Duty of Parents, and Masters, were not hereby wholly superseded; they were still invested with Authority, and it should be so managed, as to subserve the Publick Good. A great deal depends upon the right ordering of Families; if Vice and Profaneness are tolerated in them, by their Heads, Religion and Vertue cannot flourish in the Nation, whereof they are Parts. How can those who have the Direction of Families, expect that they should be Obedient to themselves, when they do not take proper Methods to hinder their forgetting God, and acting contrary to his Laws? When Mens Houses are Strangers to Divine Worship; when the Word of God is rarely, if ever read in them; when Taverns, or Ale-Houses, take up all their Evenings; when they do not oblige their Off-spring, and those

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who serve them, to attend publick Ordinances on that Day which God has set apart for that Purpose ; is it to be wonder'd at, that they are Loose and Disorderly, that they should be false to those that Trust them, and rebellions against God ? The Complaint of being badly serv'd, which is so common at present, is really a reflection upon those Persons, who do not endeavour to cultivate the Fear of God in their Dwellings.

THIS is a Day of great Liberty, wherein the generality of younger Persons are uneasy under the most reasonable Restraints, and it is to be fear'd that Licentiousness will increase, unless Family-Worship and Discipline revive. Families are Nurseries to Church and State, if they produce Plants of unwholesome Fruit, the Church and the State will suffer. Those who are entrusted with the Care of Households, should therefore use their best Endeavours to keep out of them whatever is Vicious and Profane. The Persons, to whom the Caution in my Text is address'd, are requir'd to teach with Diligence their Children, the Commandments of God. Chap. 6. 7. *Thou shalt teach them Diligently to thy Children.* God manifested his great Approbation of Abraham's careful Discharge of this Duty to his Family. Gen. 18. 17. 19. *Shall I hide from Abraham, said the Lord, the Thing that I do ? For I know him that he will command his Household and Children after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment.*

3. IT is the Duty of Magistrates to employ their Power for the Suppression of Vice and Profaneness: Such there were among the Children of *Israe'*, when *Moses* said to them, *beware that thou forget not God, in not keeping his Commandments* ; And it was the Business of their Rulers to see to the Observation of them, and to punish the Disobedi-

ent: They were therefore particularly concern'd in this Caution. It must be own'd that the *Jewish* Rulers received some peculiar Powers from God, to which Civil Governours in other Nations have no claim. But the Apostle *Paul*, in the Representation which he gives of the Office of a Magistrate, says, that *he is a Terror to evil Works.* Rom. 13. 3: That his Sword should deter Men from wicked Practices. 4. Ver. *If thou do that which is Evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in Vain; For he is the Minister of God, a revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil.* This is what he always ought to be, and what he really is if he be not negligent of his Duty.

THE Light of Reason directed *Gallio*, a Heathen Governour to apprehend that a *Matter of wicked Lewdness* was proper to be brought before him. Acts. 18. 14. Those Things which are indisputably Irreligious, and Immoral, have a direct Tendency to prejudice the State, which is the Charge of the Civil Powers, therefore they should exert themselves against Impiety and Vice, by punishing the Guilty. Though temporal Penalties are not fitted to enlighten the Mind, and to propagate Truth, yet they are very serviceable to restrain the Impious and Vicious, who are common Nufances: Nor are they in this Case inconsistent with that *Liberty of Conscience* to which every one has a Right. No one surely can think himself in Conscience oblig'd to act contrary to the plain Laws of Religion and Morality.

4. IT is the Duty of all those, who are the Friends of Religion and Vertue, to oppose Vice and Prophaneness in their Country-Men, and Fellow-Citizens. The Magistrate's Power will not avail much against Irreligion and Immorality, without the Assistance of private Persons. Those who are
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entrusted with the Execution of the Laws can rarely punish the Breaches of them without receiving Information and Evidence from others. Nor should any be ashamed of appearing in such a Service, it is the Cause of God and their Country that they stand up for, who fight against Sin. The Prevalence of Vice is hurtful to a Nation, as well as dishonourable to God: Sin is a reproach to any People. Prov. 14. 34. The Sinner himself may receive Benefit by the Sentence which is executed against his evil Works. This is intended not only for the Warning of others, but his own Reformation.

It argues great Baseness and Meanness of Spirit, to shew no concern for the Welfare of Fellow-Creatures; and there cannot be a greater Instance of indifference to the Happiness of our Neighbours, than to see them pursuing impious and vicious Ways, without making any opposition to it. He that hates Sin, as every good Person does, will strive against it in his Neighbour as well as in himself. *David*, who was so troubled because of the Iniquities committed round about him, that they drew *Rivers of Waters from his Eyes*. Psal. 119. 136. did, without doubt, all that he could to bring them to an End.

THE Servants of Sin do often associate themselves in Defence of it: Is it not fitting therefore that those who are devoted to Religion and Vertue should unite their Strength and Endeavours to crush that which is contrary to them? If good Examples and serious Exhortations are not effectual to give it a check, they should proceed to rebukes, and all the Methods which the Laws of God and their Country prescribe for the Subduing of it. That Tenderness which hinders this is really hatred, as appears from what God says to the Sons of *Israel*, *Levi. 19. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine Heart:*

Heart: Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour; and not suffer Sin upon him. Which Words plainly shew, that the Caution upon which I have insisted, was designed to excite every one of them to be watchful not only over himself, but with vigilance to resist whatever might be wicked and ungodly in one another.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

I. WE of this Nation, of these Cities, have great cause for Humiliation and Repentance. We have eaten and been fill'd; but how incautious have we been of forgetting God and breaking his Laws. That our Sins may appear in more affecting Colours, I shall give you a short View of the Goodness of God to us, which in many Instances resembles that which the *Israelites* experienc'd in *Canaan*, whereof we have an Account in the Context.

G O D, who hath determin'd the Bounds of Mens Habitations, hath plac'd us in a good Land. It is a Land of Brooks of Water, of Fountains, and Depths that spring out of Vallies and Hills. Ver. 7. It is well supply'd with Water, whereby it is made both Pleasant, and Fruitful; it may be justly added, that it is a Land of Wheat and Barley. Ver. 8. Nor is it destitute of Products that afford Delight, as well as Support: We have not only eaten Bread without Scarceness, but there has been no lack of any Thing in the Land. Ver. 9. Several Years of great Plenty have pass'd over us; we have had enough and to spare, large Supplies have been exported by us to neighbouring Nations which have help'd to increase our Wealth. What goodly Houses are built amongst us? our Flocks and our Herds are multiply'd. And so without doubt are our Silver, and Gold, Ver. 12. 13.

THE Security that is given by the Laws of the Land to our Property in these Things, adds greatly to the Comfort of them, as it has no small influence upon their Increase. We are blessed with a gracious and just Sovereign, who makes no inroads upon the Rights, and Liberties of his Subjects; under whose Government we enjoy great Peace and Tranquility. And what crowns all our Mercies, we have the free and undisturb'd Use of the Gospel of Christ, which teaches, and assist us to make a right Improvement of them.

BUT how have we behaved towards the Supreme Author of our Blessings? Here I come to a very melancholy Scene. All Ranks and Degrees of Men have wofully corrupted their Ways: To what Excesses have they run? What Multitudes in lower, as well as higher Stations, are daily *overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness*? It is sad to observe that a Disregard of the Sabbath grows amongst us. How many spend it in Idleness and Diversions, which give them such a turn to Pleasure, that they know not how to betake themselves to work, 'till a good Part of the Week be past, 'till they are driven to it by Necessity? How Dreadful and Shocking are those Oaths, and Curses, which are continually heard in our Streets? What vile Abominations are found amongst us? They are not fit to be nam'd. And how should it humble and abase us, to consider that our good God has been thus requited? That all those Sins have been committed with a high Hand in the midst of us, which we should have guarded against in our Prosperity. We were lately apprehensive that God was ent'ring into Judgment with us. The Clouds, which in former Years drop'd Fatness, seem'd to pour down Vengeance upon us. But our merciful God has given a favourable Change to the Weather: When we cry'd unto him, he deliver'd

liver'd us from our Fears, in some Measure. He hath *spoken Peace unto us*, may we not turn again to *Folly*! It becomes us to stand in Awe of the *Almighty*. It is an easy Thing with him to destroy the Fruits of the Earth, when there is a promising Prospect of a very rich Harvest: He hath often turn'd a fruitful Land into Barrenness, for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein. *Psal.* 107. 34.

WE must own that it would be a righteous Thing with God to *break the Staff of our Bread*, to punish us with the Want of all Things, seeing our Carriage towards him has been so ungrateful and disingenuous. How justly may he reduce us from that Abundance, which we have basely abused, into great Scarcity? O! That the Inhabitants of this Land would be prevailed upon to repent; *to forsake their Sins, and turn unto the Lord, with whom there is Forgiveness and plenteous Redemption.*

2. FROM what has been said, it is evident, That Attempts to reform us are now very proper, and seasonable. You, who have enter'd your selves into Societies for this Purpose, and have lifted up a Standard against Iniquity, should pursue the Combat with vigour. Though you have had considerable Successes, yet your resolute Enemy has not quitted the Field: No, far from it: You have a great deal still to do.

NEW METHODS have been lately invented to spread Debauchery amongst us, which have already produc'd very woful Effects. Those *Spiritous Liquors* that are at present in such Request, and may be so easily procur'd, have certainly a very ill Influence upon the Morals of the People, as they are Destructive of their Health, and Lives; not only of theirs, who are intoxicated by them, but of others. We have had Accounts of most inhuman Murthers, that have been of late occasioned

sioned by those pernicious and enflaming Compositions. They dispose Persons to the Perpetration of the greatest Villany and Cruelty, by firing their Passions, when they have blinded their Understandings. Is there not then great Need of your Vigilance and Care in this Case? The Encouragement given you, in prosecuting your good Design, by those in Power, is Matter of great Joy and Thankfulness to every pious vertuous Mind. I hope you shall be always countenanced by them in your Endeavours to put a stop to that which is apparently dishonourable to God, hurtful to private Persons, without Number, and therefore can never be beneficial to the Publick.

It has been of late asserted that private Vices are publick Benefits: Though this Position has been laid down in unlimited Terms, yet surely it will not be pretended that all private Vices are beneficial to the Publick. Can it be for the good of a Kingdom, that the Subjects of it should be at liberty to Defraud and Destroy one another? If only some private Vices are publick Benefits, I would fain know, who must determine which are those Vices that are advantageous to the State. If every one is allowed to judge for himself in this Case, it will introduce the utmost Confusion. particular Persons will be ready to conclude that what is Grateful and Profitable to themselves, will be useful to the Community. But if the Legislative Power of a Nation is to settle this Matter, I am sure that private Vices are not to be indulg'd in our Land, for the Laws of it expressly forbid them.

It has been suggested that Religion and Vertue are the Contrivance of Rulers, to awe their People to a Conformity to their Regulations. Are they not therefore Enemies to Government, and consequently to the publick Good, who would persuade us that there is no such Thing as moral Good, or Evil?

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THOSE who are Advocates for Vice, cannot approve of it in those, with whom they are very much concern'd. Can any Father be pleas'd with profligate Children ? Would any Master chuse debauch'd Servants ? Such as plead for publick Stews, would soon feel the Inconvenience of them if frequented by their own Daughters. And that which would be wrong in their Relatives, cannot be right in the Kindred of others. How can the Welfare of a Nation be promoted by those Things which are Prejudicial to the Families of which it is compos'd.

THAT the Publick receives Benefit by private Vices, is an assertion contrary to the Nature of Things, and to the Experience of all Ages. It is an undeniable Truth, *that Whoredom, and Wine, and new Wine take away the Heart.* Hof. 4. 11. Body and Mind are enfeebled by Intemperance, and render'd Incapable of brave and useful Actions. Does not History generally ascribe the Ruin of great Empires, which have been the World, to their Luxury ? While they observed good Discipline they flourish'd, and they soon declin'd upon the increase of Vice, which prov'd Fatal to them.

CONTINUE then to strive against Sin. The many Blessings, which you have received from God, oblige you to lay out your selves in his Service ; strenuously to encounter whatever is offensive to him. This will be an acceptable Return to him, through Jesus Christ, for his Benefits ; and may be a Means of preventing the Judgments which we deserve.

I would exhort Men of Piety, Courage and Prudence, to strengthen your Hands, by associating themselves with you ; such must own that you are engag'd in a good Work ; and why should they not bear a Part in it ? I dare say, that their Assistance

is very desirable. If these Cities continue to grow more Wealthy, and Populous, as they have done of late Years, Temptations to Sin, and Opportunities for the Commission of it will multiply. Is it not therefore to be fear'd, that the Workers of Iniquity will encrease, and that you will be in Danger of being over-power'd by them, unless you receive considerable Aids.

I would exhort those, whom the Providence of God has plac'd in plentiful Circumstances, to contribute to the Furtherance of your Undertaking. It must be own'd by every sober thinking Person, that your Societies have been very Serviceable to us. I verily believe that it is, in a great Measure, owing to you, that Insults and Abuses are not so common in our Streets, when the Day-light withdraws, as they are in other great Cities. We should dwell with less Safety in our Houses, if the Vices which you oppose, triumph'd without controul. The Estates which Parents leave to their Posterity, and are the Fruits of great Frugality, and Diligence, will be in more Danger of being wasted, if you are not encourag'd to resist Sin. Therefore Love to our Selves and Families, as well as to God, and the Land of our Nativity, should move us to lay out some Part of our Substance to carry on that Service, which is both chargeable and painful to you.

SOME of the Wickednesses with which you Conflict, cannot be subdu'd without great Trouble and Expence. Those who keep GAMING, or LEWD and DISORDERLY HOUSES, who are the Instruments of debauching and ruining Multitudes, are too often defended by such as were born to Estates; so that the Conviction and Punishment of them are not easily procur'd, as you very well know, though you are favour'd by our Courts of Judicature. There have been of late many valuable

able and useful Legacies : It is to be wish'd that the Rich would turn their Thoughts to your Societies ; and testify their Love to Religion and Vertue, by bequeathing some Portion of their Estates to maintain a vigorous and successful War against Vice and Prophaneness ; to enable you to withstand and overcome the most powerful Iniquities. The Sinews of this War are the same with those of other Wars. Who needs to be told that your Prosecutions will be feeble, and come to little, if you want Money ? And it is highly reasonable, that those who do not care to bear a Part with you, of the Burden of this Work in their Persons, should assist you as they are able with their Purfes.

THE *Reformation* of our Country will abundantly countervail the greatest Cost. But we must remember, that it is not to be effected *by Might, nor by Power*, without *the Spirit of God*. Should it not therefore be the earnest Prayer of all of us, that the blessed Spirit may be pour'd out in abundant Measures, who can easily convince and convert the most hardened and obstinate Sinners, and *make Judgments run down as Waters, and Righteousness as a mighty Stream*.

MAY you be always under the Divine Guidance and Protection, and be distinguish'd by the Favour of God, *at that Day, when he shall make up his Jewells*.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

PAGE 3. Line 3. from the Bottom read *Israel*.

P. 4. l. 9. *r.* *Israelites*.

P. 5. l. 13. *r.* *Subsistance*.

P. 7. l. 24. *r.* *Mercies*.

P. 8. l. 6. from the Bottom *r.* *that they*.

P. 10. l. 6. from the Bottom *r.* *Prophaneness*.

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